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Environmental Management

An environmental management system – Why would you?

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Eco-efficiency for the Marine Industry Fact Sheet

Do you want to

- reduce the amount of time you spend dealing with environmental issues?
- gain benefits from better management of environmental issues?
- keep track of your environmental obligations?
- improve your environmental performance?



Could an environmental management system help you?

As the marine industry continues to grow, so does the need for responsible management of the environment. Keeping track of and complying with the numerous complex laws, regulations and codes can be time consuming and costly. However, if these issues are left unchecked, they can lead to serious environmental issues and even greater financial costs. Many potential environmental issues could be avoided through the implementation of an environmental management system (EMS).

What is an EMS?

An EMS is a formal set of processes and practices that enables an organisation to systematically manage environmental issues. The EMS provides a framework for businesses to consistently improve practices, monitor progress towards defined objectives and targets, respond appropriately to emergencies and environmental incidents, and train staff in environmental management. This consistent and ongoing approach allows companies to keep track of their environmental issues better and identify problems before they occur.

Many companies use an EMS as 'insurance' against unforeseen environmental problems. Corporate customers are also increasingly requiring suppliers to have formalised environmental management systems in place as a contract condition. Furthermore, many environmental issues are often symptoms of other inefficient practices. Improving energy consumption, water use and raw material consumption through the implementation of an EMS can lead to environmental benefits as well as financial savings, often with short payback periods and low capital expenditure.

Case study: Environmental management system brings benefits to East Coast

East Coast Marina had always considered the systematic management of environmental issues in the marine environment as important, so when they found out about the Clean Marinas program, it seemed natural to gain recognition for things that they were largely already doing. *'You have to have some sort of direction when it comes to environmental issues, otherwise you can't manage them properly. That's why an environmental management plan is so important,' says Steve Newbury, Assistant Manager at East Coast Marina.*

Under the Clean Marinas program, accredited marinas fly a prominent blue flag at the marina that shows they have made a public commitment to improve, and that they manage their environmental issues well. Marinas have a right to use the logo in their own marketing, and are also promoted by the Marina Association of Australia (www.marinas.net.au) through its marketing efforts. To ensure that standards are upheld, every marina must undergo an independent assessment every year by an accredited consultant.

East Coast already had a documented environmental management plan, which made certification relatively straightforward. Having a water collection, filtration and recycling system in place also helped. Some changes had to be made to the way recyclable material was handled, but with the benefits of good environmental management and the recognition that Clean Marinas brings, East Coast Marina believes it was worth it. *'It costs just as much to do it wrong as it does to do it right, and this way, the environment benefits.'* – Steve Newbury.

To help explain all the rules and regulations that affect your business, Fact Sheet 19 on environmental legislation affecting the marine industry has also been produced as part of this series.

What are the benefits of an EMS?

Managing increasing environmental obligations and reducing environmental risk

A structured approach to environmental issues can decrease the risk of environmental incidents and reduce compliance costs. Since an EMS sets legal compliance as a minimum objective, regulators are less likely to focus on companies with management systems in place. Also, by systematically assessing environmental impacts, companies are less likely to overlook important issues, and will be better placed to meet any new regulatory requirements.

In the case of prosecution resulting from an environmental incident, a properly implemented EMS can act as a defence that the organisation has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to control risks. Furthermore, an EMS is now often required by customers as a condition of doing business.

While an EMS should help your company to improve many aspects of your environmental performance, this does not mean that environmental issues will never arise. However, an effective EMS should help you to find and fix these issues and prevent them from happening again.

Improved environmental performance, efficiency gains and improved profits

An EMS is based on the concept of continuous improvement. Through regular planning, training, monitoring and review against staff-selected objectives and targets, companies are able to continually improve management of environmental issues. Prevention of pollution and conservation of resources usually leads to reduced waste, decreased operating costs and significant efficiency gains, improving profitability.

Improved public perception

Companies that actively look at and manage environmental issues can enhance their image with the public, community groups, regulators, lenders and investors. Employees also often become more motivated when changing their practices for the benefit of the environment.

“Good environmental practice has always been a priority for us – we’re in this business because we love being on the water and our customers love being on the water. Initiatives like the Clean Marinas-Australia program help to ensure that our seas and waterways remain as clean as possible for future generations to enjoy. We hope that other marinas will take our lead and embark upon this voluntary accreditation process.” - Adam Jackson, then Director of Pier 35 Marina Village.^[1]

Table 1: The potential benefits and costs of an EMS^[2]

Potential Costs	Potential Benefits
Internal	Improved environmental performance
Staff and management time	Enhanced compliance
	Pollution prevention
	Resource conservation
External	New customers/markets
Potential consulting assistance	Increased efficiency and reduced costs
Staff training	Enhanced employee morale
	Enhanced image with public, regulators, lenders and investors
Internal labour costs usually represent most resources expended in developing an EMS	Employee awareness of environmental issues and responsibilities

See Fact Sheet 18 on where to start and what to do to implement an EMS

References

1. MAA (2005) News - Clean Marina News, The Marina Association of Australia, Crows Nest, NSW. Retrieved 14-12-2005 from: www.marinas.net.au/news_list.php?category=Clean%20Marinas
2. USEPA (2005) Environmental Management Systems (EMS), United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington DC, USA. Retrieved 14-12-2005 from: www.epa.gov/ems/

For further information

Ecobiz can assist you to reduce costs and improve eco-efficiency in your business Call 1300 369 388 for further information.

Eco-efficiency Project Officer
Marine Industries and Fibre Composites Group
Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry
Telephone: 07 3227 5756
marine@dtrdi.qld.gov.au
www.marine.industry.qld.gov.au